

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 /026 W

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O 311802Z JAN 75

FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8173

S E C R E T SEOUL 0694

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS : PFOR KS

SUBJECT: I CORPS (ROK/US) DEACTIVATION

REF: A SECDEF 261752Z DEC 74; B CINCUNC 140925 JAN 75;

C CINCUNC 231500Z JAN 75; D CINCUNC 240631Z JAN 75;

E COMUSKOREA 221000Z JAN 75

1. EMBASSY HAS BEEN CLOSELY FOLLOWING UNC/MND NEGOTIATIONS CONCERNING DEACTIVATION OF I CORPS GROUP INITIATED BY REF A. IT SEEMS CLEAR THAT DESPITE FACT MND SUH HAS ACCEPTED OUR PROPOSAL IN WRITING (REF C), ACCEPTANCE WAS GIVEN WITH RELUCTANCE AND ONLY BECAUSE ROKS BELIEVED DECISION WAS, AS MND SUH PUT IT IN HIS LETTER, "INEVITABLE."

2. AS INDICATED IN GENERAL STILWELL'S FIRST MESSAGE ON DISCUSSIONS (REF B), ROK MILITARY LEADERS ARE PROUD TO BE TAKING OVER I CORPS GROUP RESPONSIBILITIES, BUT ROKG VIEWS ARE DOMINATED BY FOLLOWING POLITICAL CONCERNS: THAT I CORPS GROUP SIGNIFICANCE MUCH GREATER THAN FEW AMERICANS INVOLVED; THAT DEACTIVATION INDICATES WEAKENING OF US COMMITMENT AND POSSIBLE FURTHER DRAWDOWNS; AND THAT IT WILL BE INTERPRETED IN THIS FASHION BY NORTH KOREA AND ALSO IN SOUTH, IT IS HEIGHTENED BY OTHER RECENT DEVELOPMENTS INTERPRETED BY ROKS AS LESSENING OF OUR COMMITMENT; THESE INCLUDE DECLINE OF MILITARY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM, FRASER AMENDMENT, PLAN TO TURN OVER NIKE-HERCULES BATTALION,

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DECISION NOT TO DEPLOY LANCE MISSILE, AND PERSISTENT

PRESS REPORTS THAT US IS CONSIDERING CONVERTING
SECOND DIVISION INTO MOBILE RESERVE.

3. IN ADDITION TO ROK REACTION WE ALSO NOT THAT AT
TIME OF HEIGHTENED UNEASE IN SOUTH/NORTH RELATIONS I
CORPS GROUP DISESTABLISHMENT WILL MEAN LOSS OF A
COST/EFFECTIVE INSTRUMENT OF OPERATIONAL CONTROL IN
SENSITIVE AREA ALONG DMZ. CINCUNC ABILITY TO UNDESTAND
AND CONTROL DEVELOPMENTS IN THIS AREA WILL BE
LESSENED. I CORPS GROUP COMMANDER, LT. GEN HOLLINGSWORTH,
HAS WON DEEP RESPECT AMONG ROKS FOR HIS COMMAND AND
PLANNING ABILITY AND HIS PRESENCE FOR ADDITIONAL PERIOD
OF TIME COULD WELL PROVE IMPORTANT IN OUR EFFORTS TO
MONITOR AND IF NECESSARY CONTROL ROK REACTIONS OVER
COMING MONTHS.

4. IN COURSE OF RECENT VISITS HERE CONGRESSIONAL
FIGURES KNOWLEDGEABLE ON SECURITY AFFAIRS HAVE
CAREFULLY QUESTIONED US ON I CORPS GROUP DISSOLUTION.
IN RECENT MEETING WITH CINCUNC AND AMBASSADOR CODEL
EXPRESSED DOUBTS ABOUT COST/EFFECTIVENESS OF ELIMINATING
I CORPS GROUP WITH THE SUBSTANTIAL OPERATIONAL CONTROL
IT GIVES US AT THIS TIME. SINCE AS WE UNDERSTAND IT
INITIAL IMPETUS FOR RECENT ROUND OF MILITARY
HEADQUARTERS REDUCTIONS WORLDWIDE STEMMED AT LEAST IN
PART FROM CONGRESS THESE DOUBTS COULD PROVE SIGNIFICANT.

5. BALANCED AGAINST ABOVE FACTORS, WHICH TAKEN
TOGETHER ARGUE IN FAVOR OF SLOWING DOWN I CORPS GROUP
DEACTIVATION, EMBASSY IS WELL AWARE RATIONALE WHICH
GAVE INITIAL IMPETUS FOR THIS STEP AND WHICH CONTINUE
TO HOLD TRUE. DEACTIVATION HAS LONG BEEN IN OUR PLANS
AND IMPLEMENTATION WAS ALREADY POSTPONED ONCE SOME YEARS
AGO; IT WILL ENCOURAGE ROK SELF-RELIANCE AND DEVELOP
PROFESSIONALISM (ROK MILITARY LEADERS ARE THEMSELVES
ANXIOUS FOR CHANGE IN DUE COURSE FOR THESE REASONS);
DEACTIVATION SHOULD HAVE POSITIVE EFFECTS PUBLICLY IN
US AND INTERNATIONALLY AND SPECIFICALLY IN CONTEXT
UN CONSIDERATION OF KOREA; AND A MODEST NUMBER OF
PERSONNEL SPACES WILL BE SAVED. IN OUR VIEW, HOWEVER,
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NOTHING IN THESE POINTS COMPELS US TO TAKE IMMEDIATE
ACTION, A SLOWDOWN ON THE OTHER HAND WOULD NOT
ONLY ALLEVIATE PROBLEMS CITED ABOVE BUT WOULD HAVE
POSITIVE EFFECT ON ROK MORALE BY GIVING EVIDENCE OF
OUR CONTINUING COMMITMENT AND SINCERE WILLINGNESS
TO RESPOND TO ROK CONCERNS WHEN WE CONSULT WITH THEM.

6. IT IS EMBASSY CONCLUSION BASED ON ABOVE FACTORS AS

VIEWS FROM SEOUL, THAT DESPITE PROGRESS ALREADY
MADE IT WOULD BE WELL TO RECONSIDER NECESSITY DEACTIVATING
I CORPS GROUP IN ACCORD SCHEDULE REF A. BECAUSE OF THE
POSITIVE REASONS FOR DEACTIVATION WE DO NOT BELIEVE
IT DESIRABLE OR INDEED NECESSARY TO CALL IT OF
INDEFINITELY. WE BELIEVE THAT WHILE ROKS WOULD CONTINUE TO
HAVE SOME POLITICAL PROBLEMS WITH DEACTIVATION BY END FY 76.
THEY WOULD ACCEPT POST- PONEMENT FOR A YEAR AS MILITARILY
SOUND AND AS A REASONABLE CONCESSION TO THEIR CONCERNS, AND WE
RECOMMEND THIS AS NEW TARGET DATE.

7. AS ALTERNATIVE TO THIS TIMING DEPARTMENT MAY ALSO
WISH TO CONSIDER LINKING I CORPS GROUP DISESTABLISHMENT
TO DISSOLUTION OF UN COMMAND. IF TIMING OF TWO
ACTIONS PROVES COMPATIBLE, THIS APPROACH WOULD HAVE
ADVANTAGE OF SUBMERGING PROBLEMS RELATED TO
I CORPS GROUP INTO LARGER ORGANIZATIONAL QUESTION.

8. IF ABOVE RECOMMENDATION PROVES ACCEPTABLE TO
WASHINGTON AGENCIES WE WOULD SUGGEST AS FIRST STEP
THAT DISCUSSIONS MIGHT BE HELD WITH APPROPRIATE
CONGRESSIONAL AND DOD FIGURES. AS INDICATED WE BELIEVE
THAT RECEPTION FROM CONGRESSIONAL QUARTERS MIGHT WELL BE
FAVORABLE.

9. DISCUSSIONS WITH ROKS ARE PROCEEDING APACE AND
DEADLINES FOR ACTION ARE TIGHT. WE URGE THAT PROMPT
DECISION BE MADE ON THIS RECOMMENDATION.

10. I AM INFORMING GENERAL STILWELL OF THIS MESSAGE.
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